



## Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs

Tony Evers, Governor | Mary M. Kolar, Secretary

May 14, 2020

Dear Members and Families:

Over the past couple of months, we have shared with you all the steps we have been taking to protect our staff and members from COVID-19 (also known as the coronavirus). Each time I update you, I am thankful to let you know we have no cases of the virus in our Home. Today, I am again grateful to be able to say we have zero confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our facility.

While the Safer at Home Order is no longer in effect, we must still do our part to help curb the spread of this virus to protect our members, our staff, and our community. This means we will be taking the next step in our already rigorous screening protocols. Free testing and diagnostics are being provided to all of Wisconsin's 373 nursing homes to test all nursing home residents and staff, with the goal of testing more than 10,000 residents and staff per week during the month of May.

These tests are important. By more aggressively testing people for COVID-19, we can then properly isolate people who test positive and quarantine their close contacts; we will effectively be boxing in the virus.

Starting Friday, May 15th we will begin testing all staff for the virus. As I have mentioned before, any staff that has had any symptoms previously has been tested and required to stay home until they receive their test results. Our staff have had zero positive tests to date.

Then, the week of May 18<sup>th</sup>- May 26<sup>th</sup>, we will begin testing members. Again, we have had some members who have gone to the doctor for other unrelated reasons who have been tested and have had zero positive tests.

Testing for our Home will be conducted by facility nursing staff. The nasal swab test will be used. This testing method is less intrusive than other methods available. To protect confidentiality, test results will only be shared with each member OR their responsible party/POA-HC. Positive test results will be reported to local public health officials as required for contact tracing investigation.

Testing will need to be conducted periodically until further notice. You will receive notice of future testing sessions as they are scheduled.

I understand this may make you anxious. We have worked hard to keep the virus out of our Homes. But with the tests widely available, we must take advantage and ensure that potentially asymptomatic individuals are tested now.

Limiting who enters our facilities, temperature screening those who do, and strongly enforcing our infectious disease control procedures are the best tools to keep the virus at bay. Now we have another tool – testing – that will help us to control the spread of the disease and collectively help keep our community healthy so that we do not bring this terrible virus into our Home.

Finally, we continue to follow the guidance of the Centers of Disease Control for Long-term Care Facilities and Nursing Homes to restrict all visitation to facilities except for certain compassionate care reasons, such as end-of-life situations. The ease of spread in a long-term care setting and the severity of illness that occurs in residents with COVID-19 requires our continued diligence to prevent the kind of outbreaks that other nursing facilities have experienced.

I am happy to answer any questions you have; you may reach me at 608-294-7827.

Respectfully,

Diane Lynch  
Homes Division Administrator